

**Sierra County
Children and Families**

**Strategic
Plan
2000-2001**

**Sierra County Children and Families
Commission
315 Main Street, P.O. Box 556**

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SIERRA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This initial Strategic Plan of the Sierra County Children and Families Commission is the result of an extensive needs assessment and planning process, and is meant to lay the foundation for an integrated and comprehensive program of promoting, supporting and improving early childhood development that enhances the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of children in Sierra County.

To that end, the Commission has identified a number of strategic actions that will address and remove the barriers to achieving that goal. Specific needs found in the planning process included:

- access to medical services
- improved public transportation
- access to child care
- services for children with special needs
- parenting classes/education
- support and assistance from family members
- educational and recreational opportunities for young children
- information about child development and how to raise children
- insurance: 34.8% of county children and families are on MediCal or have no health/dental insurance. Few providers in the county accept MediCal patients.
- access to affordable dental care, parent education regarding dental hygiene, and dental caries in children
- access to effective speech therapy program
- improved nutrition among 0-5 year olds, parent education regarding nutrition

From this list of needs and service gaps, the Commission developed a comprehensive list of objectives based on its two overarching goals, which are:

- To improve, promote, and support early development of children from prenatal to five years of age with comprehensive programs which will increase community awareness, parent education, nurturing of young children, quality of childcare, and the accessibility and effectiveness of social services, health care, and dental care.
- To facilitate the creation of an integrated, comprehensive, and collaborative system of services to enhance optimal early childhood development.

The Commission has identified long-term strategic results and short-term measurable objectives in each of the California Children and Families Strategic Results areas, which are:

- Improved Family Functioning: Strong Families
- Improved Child Development: Children Learning and Ready for School
- Improved Child Health: Healthy Children

- Improved Systems for Families: Integrated, Accessible, Inclusive, and Culturally Appropriate Services
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Proposition 10 and the Children and Families Act have given California counties an unprecedented opportunity to improve and enrich the lives of its youngest citizens, and thereby immeasurably improve the future of the state and the nation. California has a chance to show that investing in our young children will allow us to reap enormous benefits when those children become teens, young adults, and productive members of society. It is an opportunity warmly welcomed and embraced by the Sierra County Children and Families Commission, and the Commissioners take very seriously the trust that they make sound decisions and responsible investments.

This is the beginning plan, and as with all good plans, it will be continually evaluated, revised, refined and enhanced based on a continuing process of community input and collaborative planning. Through it all, the focus will be always on what will make Sierra County a better place to raise children.

INTRODUCTION, MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

Vision Statement of the California Children and Families Commission:

All California children will thrive in supportive, nurturing, and loving environments, enter school healthy and ready to learn, and become productive, well-adjusted members of society.

In November 1998, California voters approved Proposition 10, the California Children and Families Commission Initiative. Proposition 10 added a 50 cents per pack tax to tobacco products. The revenues from this tax are earmarked to meet early childhood development needs of children ages prenatal to five years of age. Eighty percent of the revenues from the tax are distributed to California counties after they have developed and submitted individual Strategic Plans to the State Commission. Twenty percent of the revenues remain with the State Commission for statewide projects meeting childhood development needs. The amount of the distribution to each county is based upon its birth rate.

Mission Statement of the California Children and Families Commission:

“The California Children and Families Act of 1998 is designed to provide, on a community-by-community basis, all children prenatal to five years of age with a comprehensive, integrated system of early childhood development services. Through the integration of health care, quality child care, parent education and effective intervention programs for families at risk, children and their parents and caregivers will be provided with the tools necessary to foster secure, healthy and loving attachments. These attachments will lay the emotional, physical and intellectual foundation for every child to enter school ready to learn and develop the potential to become productive, well-adjusted members of society.”

In its Guidelines for County Strategic Plans, the California Children and Families Commission identified three areas for strategic planning and results to be achieved. Those areas are:

- Improved Family Functioning: Strong Families
- Improved Child Development: Children Learning and Ready for School
- Improved Child Health: Healthy Children

This document is the Strategic Plan developed by the Sierra County Children and Families Commission to comply with the State Guidelines and the intent of the Children and Families Act of 1998. The following pages represent the work accomplished by the County Commission since its formation in January 1999. The Commission recognizes that the Plan is broad in scope and covers the possibilities of incorporating several potential objectives and strategies in its ongoing efforts to meet the needs of Sierra County children and families. It will be reviewed and revised annually as work continues and the community identifies further needs and objectives.

SIERRA COUNTY CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION

Purpose and Intent

The Sierra County Children and Families Commission was created for the purposes of promoting, supporting, and improving the early development of children from the prenatal stage to five years of age. These purposes shall be accomplished through the establishment of comprehensive programs emphasizing community awareness, education, nurturing, child care, social services, and health care as outlined in the California Children and Families First Act, and any other purpose as allowed by law.

The Commission's intent is to facilitate the creation and implementation of an integrated, comprehensive, and collaborative system of services to enhance optimal early childhood development. It is the intent of the Commission to promote and develop services in the areas of childcare, health care, enrichment programs, early intervention programs, and parent education for children and parents of children from zero (including prenatal) to five years of age.

Duties

The duties of the Sierra County Children and Families Commission are to:

- Provide for dissemination of public information and educational materials to members of the general public and to professionals for the purpose of developing appropriate awareness and knowledge regarding the promotion, support, and improvement of early childhood development.
- Develop an integrated and comprehensive program of promoting, supporting and improving early childhood development that enhances the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of children in Sierra County, including the following components:
 - a. Parental education and support service in all areas required for, and relevant to, informed and healthy parenting. Examples of parental education shall include, but are not limited to, prenatal and postnatal infant and maternal nutrition, education and training in newborn and infant care and nurturing for optimal early childhood development, parenting and other necessary skills, child abuse prevention, and avoidance of tobacco, drugs, and alcohol during pregnancy. Examples of parental support services shall include, but are not limited to, family support centers offering an integrated system of services required for the development and maintenance of self-sufficiency, domestic violence prevention and treatment, tobacco and other substance abuse control and treatment, voluntary intervention for families at risk, and such other prevention and family services and counseling critical to successful early childhood development.
 - b. The availability and provision of high quality, accessible, and affordable child care, both in-home and at child care facilities, that emphasizes education, training and qualifications of care providers, increased availability and access to child care facilities, resource and referral services, technical assistance to ensure appropriate child care for all households.

- c. The provision of child health care services that emphasize prevention, diagnostic screenings, and treatment not covered by other programs; and the provision of prenatal and postnatal maternal health care services that emphasize prevention, immunizations, nutrition, treatment of tobacco and other substance abuse, general health screenings, and treatment services not covered by other programs.

Guiding Principles

The Sierra County Children and Families Commission is guided by the following principles:

- Be fair and open in decision making
- Be accountable and responsive to the residents of Sierra County
- Promote and fund high-quality programs and services
- Promote integration of services and convenient accessibility for families
- Plan for sustainability of programs and services
- Leverage funds to maximize Proposition 10 and other community resources and promote integrated services
- Participate in evaluative activities that are meaningful at the county level

THE PLANNING PROCESS

Background

Sierra County is a sparsely populated, mountainous, rural county of approximately 985 square miles located in the Sierra Nevada mountains north of Lake Tahoe and Truckee. Much of the land is national forest. It is bordered by Plumas and Lassen Counties to the north, Nevada County to the south, and Yuba County to the west. Sierra County's geography includes elevations as low as 2,800 feet in the foothills, and as high as 8,589 feet at its highest mountain peak.

The county is geographically traversed east to west by Highway 49; Yuba Pass on this highway divides the county into east and west sides, with the east located in high desert country and the west in rugged mountains and canyons of the Sierra Buttes and the Yuba and Downie Rivers. The County's population of 3,318 (1990 census) resides in the two small towns of Loyalton (east) and Downieville (west), which are about an hour's drive apart in good weather. There are also several widely dispersed very small communities scattered throughout the county.

While Downieville is the County seat, most County services are provided in the larger population center of Loyalton, the county's only incorporated city. Highway 89 traverses the county from Truckee in the south to the Plumas County line in the north. The State of Nevada lies to the east, and Reno, Nevada, (about 45 minutes by car southeast of Loyalton) is an important medical, shopping and entertainment center for residents on the east end of the county. The Grass Valley area (about 45 minutes by car southwest of Downieville) serves this purpose for residents on the west side. Both Highway 49 and Highway 89 are secondary two-lane highways that become quite difficult to travel with the advent of winter's ice and snow. Winter driving conditions, which can occur from November through March, often extend driving times by double or triple, or preclude driving completely for hours or days at a time.

The county boasts wilderness scenery along every mile of highway, as well as a great diversity of geographical assets, from the agricultural ranch land of the vast Sierra Valley to the historical and recreational attractions of the rivers of the gold rush, mountain trails, and cross-country skiing and other winter sports. In addition to recreation and tourism, employment opportunities are primarily in federal, state and local government; timber, logging, and sawmills; ranching; and mining.

Development of the Sierra County Children and Families Commission

The Sierra County Children and Families Commission (SCCFC) was created by County Ordinance No. 875 on December 15, 1998. Five Commissioners were appointed to the Commission at that time. On December 7, 1999, the Board of Supervisors amended County Ordinance No. 875 to change the Commission membership from five (5) members to five (5) to nine (9) members, and then appointed Donald Hemphill to the Commission with an effective date of January 21, 2000. Currently, the Sierra County Commissioners are:

Pamela Filippini, Toddler Towers Child Care Center

Klaus Ludwig, Director, Sierra County Health and Human Services

Donna Metzler, Public Health Nurse, Sierra County Health and Human Services

William Rouse, Sierra County Superintendent of Schools
Patricia Whitley, Sierra County Board of Supervisors
Donald Hemphill, Executive Director, Trendel Insurance

Under the original Children and Families Act allocation formula, Sierra County was slated to receive approximately \$12,397.00 for Fiscal Year 1999-2000. It was not until the State Commission decided in October 1999 to increase the minimum allocation to small counties to \$200,000 per year that the SCCFC began meeting regularly (monthly) and making plans to develop an extensive program.

Developing the SCCFC became an immediate priority. Much activity took place early in the year 2000. Bylaws were adopted January 12; a Request for Proposals for needs assessment and outreach was released February 16; and recruiting efforts for an Executive Director began in February. However, the possible repeal of Proposition 10 on the March 7 ballot loomed as a threat to SCCFC existence. The Commission opted to go forward with the hiring process so as to be ready to act as of March 8, 2000, if the initiative to repeal failed, as it indeed did. An Executive Director began work on April 24, and a contract was signed for a comprehensive needs assessment and community outreach on June 1.

Needs Assessment and Community Outreach

In June SCCFC contracted with Diversified Management of Susanville to develop, focus test, and conduct two surveys that would result in meaningful data that would inform its strategic planning process. The first was a survey for parents/caregivers of children 0-4 years old to determine their perspectives on the needs families face in Sierra County, to distribute informational brochures about SCCFC, and to place follow-up informational advertisements about SCCFC in local newspapers. The second was a survey for service providers.

The goal of this outreach and assessment effort was to reach as many members of the target population as possible, using combined strategies of holding drop-in center “events” and door-to-door outreach in very remote and sparsely populated areas. A \$50.00 gift certificate for groceries was offered as an incentive to participate. In addition, a local liaison in each of three geographical areas of the county helped to identify families with young children, encourage them to participate, and introduce them to the outreach workers. The local liaisons also collected and returned surveys completed after the drop-in event and those that had been left at homes by door-to-door outreach workers. In addition, the Sierra County Literacy Program staff, who were responsible for translating the survey into Spanish, conducted surveys and provided SCCFC information to seven Latino families in Loyalton, and to a few others in the literacy program in Sierra City.

The community survey included 95 questions in the three content areas of Health/Dental Care, Child Care and School Readiness. Several questions had multiple parts. There were 65 respondents representing 76 children (the estimated total population aged 0-4 years in Sierra County is 125, so approximately 61% of parents were surveyed). The community survey is included herein as Appendix A.

The provider survey was conducted as a personal interview containing open-ended questions constructed to derive a list of services available in the county and to determine the service provider's needs and their perspectives regarding the needs of county children 0-4 years of age and their families. The provider survey is included herein as Appendix B.

Below is a chronology of outreach activities, as provided to SCCFC by Diversified Management:

Focus Group/Trial Run of Needs Assessment Questionnaire

- A focus group of ten parents/caregivers was established, either pregnant or with children between the ages of 0 and 5. A trial run on the survey was conducted July 5. Several valuable comments and suggestions were received from the focus group members, and the questions were revised accordingly.

Advertising

- A full page black and white advertisement was published in the Mountain Messenger on Thursday, July 20 and in the Sierra Booster on Friday, July 21 advertising the drop-in centers in Loyalton, Downieville, and the Pliocene Ridge area in Pike. Charter Communications was also contacted to run the advertisement on the cable television advertising station in Loyalton.
- Flyers advertising the drop-in centers were distributed to Toddler Towers in Loyalton and to liaisons in each of three geographical areas for further distribution throughout Sierra County.
- Postcards advertising the drop-in centers were mailed on July 14 to all box and route holders in Sierra County.

Drop-in Centers

- Drop-in centers were conducted on July 24 at Loyalton Elementary School in Loyalton, July 26 at Downieville School in Downieville, and August 4 at Pliocene Ridge School in Pike. Additional door-to-door efforts were made to reach residents unable to attend the drop-in centers.
- 65 surveys were collected from Sierra County residents.

Sierra County Provider Interviews

- Face-to-face provider interviews took place August 16-18. These interviews were conducted with nearly all providers of services to families with children 0-5 years old.

Diversified Management submitted its report of findings from the SCCFC needs assessment to the SCCFC on August 31, 2000; that report is incorporated in this document as Appendix C. In addition to this comprehensive needs assessment, several other reports and assessments conducted by various county agencies over the past several years were reviewed by Commissioners and staff. Also reviewed to help inform Commissioners and Staff as to current research and best practices in the three Proposition 10 focus areas were all materials provided by the California Children and Families Commission, the California Center for Health Improvement through the Proposition Technical Assistance Center, and the UCLA Center for Healthier Children.

The Commission set to work immediately upon receiving the results of the needs assessment to review all research, information and data and develop an initial Strategic Plan. This plan was then presented in a Public Hearing, approved and adopted at its October 11, 2000, meeting.

SIERRA COUNTY'S ASSETS, NEEDS, AND SERVICE GAPS

I. Assets

Sierra County is the second smallest in California. Its numbers work to its advantage in several ways. People know one another, both personally and professionally. This closeness often enhances trust and the communities' ability to work together in collaborative efforts.

Close proximity is also an asset. Although the few small communities are widely separated by geographical barriers, within each community the people and those who serve them are generally within walking distance. Those who live outside the small towns do so at their choosing and many accept the difficulties of getting the services they need.

Sierra County's distance from large metropolitan areas, and the distances even from one another engender a strong culture of rugged individualism that calls for independence and taking care of oneself. The people of Sierra County pride themselves on their ability to self-govern and solve their own problems. Small-town family values are important, crime rates are very low, and people pull together in time of need.

For the sake of this document, additional specific assets are categorized below as related to Health/Dental Care, Childcare and School Readiness, Support of Strong Families, and Integration of Services.

Health/Dental Care: Sierra County has one hospital, the Sierra Valley District Hospital, in Loyalton, which is in a process of determining whether to restructure or close its doors. This hospital is seen as a first response facility which often refers patients to additional care outside the County. The County has two clinics, the Sierra Valley Medical Clinic in Loyalton, and the Western Sierra Medical/Dental Clinic in Downieville. None of these provide for the delivery of babies, therefore only emergency or home deliveries take place within the County. Most children are born in Reno, Nevada County or Plumas County hospitals, making tracking of newborns somewhat complicated. MediCal patients are accepted at the clinic in Downieville.

There are two dentists practicing general dentistry in Sierra County. The dentist in Loyalton does not accept MediCal patients. The Downieville dental clinic does accept MediCal patients. There are no pediatric dentists or doctors with offices located within the county.

Childcare and School Readiness

Approximately 73 children 0-4 years of age are enrolled in childcare in Sierra County. There are no state-accredited pre-school facilities. There are three licensed family day-care providers, one licensed day-care center, and the County Office of Education special needs preschool in Loyalton, two licensed family day-care providers in Downieville, and one in the small town of Sattley. There are 12 license-exempt providers in the county. Staff at the Loyalton centers have been able to acquire required professional training primarily through the Feather River College Child Development program in Quincy (one-to-two hours away by car for county residents).

Support for Strong Families

Family support for Sierra County residents is provided primarily through the County Social Services agencies; the County Health Department through its Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program; the County Department of Education; the Child Abuse Prevention Council, and the Childcare Resource and Referral program. Last year, the latter two agencies worked together to create the Sierra County Family Resource Center. The Coalition Against Violence, the Mountain Circle Family Services (foster-care services), the Plumas Crisis Intervention and Resource Center (serving Plumas and Sierra Counties with intervention for domestic violence, sexual assault, and suicide), and R.A.I.N.B.O.W. Family Support and Resource Network (for families who have children with special needs) provide additional support.

Integrated Services

The small population of Sierra County results in very close proximity of services, especially in Loyalton. The County Public Health and Social Services Departments are located in one building, with the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol staff just across the street. They are easily accessible to most Loyalton area residents. Other agency services (literacy, crisis intervention, family services, child abuse prevention, and childcare referral) are housed in small remodeled houses along Loyalton's Main Street, all within a few blocks of one another. This allows for somewhat easy accessibility of services for Loyalton residents, but does little for outlying residents and those on the west side. Various answers, from home visiting to provision of transportation have been used by agencies to serve the west side residents.

2. Needs and Service Gaps

The SCCFC Needs Assessment identified several gaps that require immediate attention, and suggested several areas where long-term planning will benefit the children and families of Sierra County. Among a list of 18 services provided in the County, the following seven were identified by parents as having the most pressing needs:

1. medical services
2. public transportation
3. child care
4. services for children with special needs
5. parenting classes/education
6. support and assistance from family members
7. educational and recreational opportunities for young children
8. information about child development and how to raise children

In addition, service providers identified the following areas as the most pressing:

1. insurance: 34.8% of county children and families are on MediCal or have no health/dental insurance. Few providers in the county accept MediCal patients.
2. access to affordable dental care, parent education regarding dental hygiene, and dental caries in children
3. access to effective speech therapy program
4. improved nutrition among 0-5 year olds, parent education regarding nutrition

5. an innovative program to empower parents and families to utilize existing services

Additionally, some factors that are considered assets have their negative side as well. The geographic separation of communities has created an east-side/west-side service gap in several areas identified in the needs assessment, primarily in child and infant care, pre-school availability, and recreational opportunities. The difficulties in driving from one side of the county to the other, and the lack of public transportation, create a need to determine for nearly every service provider the means by which to serve both sides of the county. The Children and Families Commission is no exception.

Also, the culture of rugged individualism is incompatible with utilization of service agencies. The needs assessment provider interviews identified a general reluctance among families to avail themselves of existing services. Among a list of ten major services provided, only County Health Department services, including WIC, were well known and utilized by more than half of respondents. There is an obvious need for innovative solutions that will involve parents and families in existing and newly provided services.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES, AND EVALUATION

1. Goals, Objectives and Strategies

The overarching goals of the SCCFC are:

- To improve, promote, and support early development of children from prenatal to five years of age with comprehensive programs which will increase community awareness, parent education, nurturing of young children, quality of childcare, and the accessibility and effectiveness of social services, health care, and dental care.
- To facilitate the creation of an integrated, comprehensive, and collaborative system of services to enhance optimal early childhood development.

To achieve these goals, the Commission has determined several specific objectives, strategies, and strategic results they believe will best answer immediate needs and put into place a structure and system for long-term support of its commitment to ensure quality, accessible and useful services for Sierra County children and families. In the table on the following pages, each strategic action is described, along with the related need or gap, the strategic result(s) expected, related objective(s), and possible indicator(s) to measure effectiveness.

Request for Proposal Process for Mini-Grant Programs

The Strategic Plan calls for two Mini-Grant programs, one for supporting development of educational and recreational activities for children 0-4 years old, and the other to address newly-identified needs or emergent programs and services. A standing Mini-Grant Committee consisting of community, agency and Commission members, will be created so as to avoid potential conflicts of interest. The Mini-Grant Committee will work with the Executive Director to develop one applicant-friendly Request for Proposals (RFP) that will allow community members to apply at any time for either type of funding. Ongoing technical assistance will be offered to ensure that proposals address the goals and objectives of Proposition 10 and the Commission. The Mini-Grant Committee will review the applications quarterly and make recommendations to the Commission for final approval. The Executive Director will then work with those awarded mini-grants to develop subcontracts with measurable objectives and deliverables that are consistent with county and state evaluation efforts. The Executive Director will monitor the mini-grant subcontracts and present monthly reports on mini-grant progress to the Commission.

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	RELATED NEEDS/GAPS	STRATEGIC RESULT(S)	OBJECTIVE(S)	POSSIBLE INDICATOR(S)
<p>1. Provide a newborn package (probably the State Commission's Welcome Baby Kit with additional local information) and place ads in newspapers with a picture welcoming and celebrating the birth of every child (Sierra County's newest resident) to foster an attitude of celebration and respect for young children. Also provide an annual birthday package for each child through 4th birthday, which will include educational materials, information about the child's development in the coming year (what to expect), what parents need to do regarding medical and dental check-ups, etc. during the coming year; educational videos for children, effective parenting videos, educational books, toys, learning materials (art supplies, number and word games, etc.), information about county health and child care programs, magnets with phone numbers, other similar materials. Coordinate efforts with health department, medical and dental care providers, childcare providers, other services, library and literacy program, arts program, etc.</p>	<p>Parent education and motivation</p> <p>Underutilized services</p> <p>Underutilized Family Resource Center as a information source</p>	<p>Improved Systems for Families: Families can identify a single point of entry to all services they need to support their children</p> <p>Improved Child Development: Children 0-4 years, including those with developmental delays and special needs, have access to and receive quality early care</p> <p>Improved Family Functioning: Parents are knowledgeable about child development and practice effective parenting skills</p>	<p>Increase motivation and capacity of parents to raise well-adjusted children in supportive, nurturing and loving environments</p> <p>Increase awareness and usage of available services and resources</p>	<p>Number of parents expressing need for more parent education</p> <p>Number of contacts/visits to service providers</p> <p>Rating of Family Resource Center as a useful information source</p>

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	RELATED NEEDS/GAPS	STRATEGIC RESULT(S)	OBJECTIVE(S)	POSSIBLE INDICATOR(S)
2. Create a monthly newsletter and distribute to all families with children 0-4 years old. Newsletter will have educational articles, news about programs and services, recreational opportunities, news of child-centered events, etc.	Effective means of communicating with and motivating parents of children 0-4 years old	<p>Improved Systems for Families: Families can identify a single point of entry to all services they need to support their children</p> <p>Improved Child Development: Children 0-4 years, including those with developmental delays and special needs, have access to and receive quality early care</p> <p>Improved Family Functioning: Parents are knowledgeable about child development and practice effective parenting skills</p>	<p>Motivate and increase the capacity of parents to raise well-adjusted children in supportive, nurturing and loving environments</p> <p>Increase awareness and usage of available services and resources</p>	<p>Number of families responding to information in the newsletter</p> <p>Increase in number of contacts with and visits to service providers</p>

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	RELATED NEEDS/GAPS	STRATEGIC RESULT(S)	OBJECTIVE(S)	POSSIBLE INDICATOR(S)
3. Create a Children's Center in Loyalton to house child-related services, child care center, pre-school program, library/literacy services, space for family/community activities, parenting and recreational programs and activities; outdoor space for playground and family/community events and activities, etc. Locate suitable site for purchase or lease.	Fragmented services	Improved Systems for Families: Families can identify a single point of entry to all services they need to support their children Investments are directed toward effective integrative practices	Increased service integration Increased accessibility of services Increased awareness of services	Number of services and groups collaborating to provide integrated services, coordinated service delivery, shared information, and non-duplication of effort Number of families who have access to services Number of parents who are aware of and use services provided

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	RELATED NEEDS/GAPS	STRATEGIC RESULT(S)	OBJECTIVE(S)	POSSIBLE INDICATOR(S)
<p>4. Work with representative community group in west side of county to address/ resolve disparities between east and west side of county which were identified in needs assessment, which will include but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child and infant care • pre-school • recreational opportunities 	<p>Access to quality child care</p> <p>Opportunities for learning experiences</p>	<p>Improved Child Development: Children enter kindergarten “ready for school”</p> <p>Improved Systems for Families: Services reduce the disparities in health status, school readiness and family functioning across geographic areas</p>	<p>Increase capacity to serve infants and children in child care facilities</p> <p>Increase access to licensed family child care and center-based early child care</p> <p>Increase capacity to serve children with special needs</p> <p>Increase readiness for preschool and kindergarten</p>	<p>Number of available licensed child care spaces for children 0-5 years old</p> <p>Number of child care resource and referral services provided</p> <p>Number of children with developmental delays and other special needs who have access to quality child care programs in typical environments</p> <p>Number of child care providers receiving training about school readiness</p>

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	RELATED NEEDS/GAPS	STRATEGIC RESULT(S)	OBJECTIVE(S)	POSSIBLE INDICATOR(S)
5. Support expansion of the literacy project's services for young children and their families in Loyalton, Sierraville, Sierra City, Downieville and other areas. Supplement staff, books and materials.	School readiness Hispanic population's need for ESL	Improved Child Development: Children enter kindergarten "ready for school" Improved Family Functioning: Parents are able to understand the information provided to them by services and programs	Increased readiness for preschool and kindergarten Increased capacity to provide parenting education	Availability and use of family literacy programs Availability and use of libraries, books and other learning resources Number of parents participating in parent education and other educational opportunities
6. Convene a task force to conduct research into needs, desires, options and feasibility of collaboration to provide the transportation required to better access services for children and families.	Lack of adequate transportation throughout county	Improved Systems for Families: Services reduce the disparities in health status, school readiness and family functioning across geographic areas	Increase accessibility of services	Number of families utilizing services as a result of available transportation

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	RELATED NEEDS/GAPS	STRATEGIC RESULT(S)	OBJECTIVE(S)	POSSIBLE INDICATOR(S)
7. Supplement existing family counseling programs to provide expanded family counseling services to support keeping families intact, strengthen at-risk families, increase capacity of family members to effectively cope with problems created by divorce and other stressful or crisis situations, increase capacity of divorced parents to continue their relationships with and fulfill their roles and responsibilities to their children. Work with mental health and related existing services, to collaboratively develop an integrated program. Work with childcare providers, health and mental health providers, churches, other services to develop a referral system.	High rate of single parent households	Improved Family Functioning: Families are knowledgeable about and practice safe, nurturing environments that support strong, resilient families	Increased capacity to provide parent support services addressing such issues as self-sufficiency, domestic violence prevention and intervention, tobacco and other substance abuse control and treatment, requested or voluntary intervention for families at risk, and other prevention and family services and counseling critical to successful early childhood development	<p>Number of families receiving appropriate referrals, voluntary interventions, and family support services (e.g., tobacco and other substance abuse treatment, parenting assistance, family counseling services)</p> <p>Availability and use of mutual support and self-help services and groups.</p> <p>Number of families served through support hot/warm lines</p> <p>Number of incidents requiring crisis-oriented family intervention</p> <p>Number of single-parent families</p>

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	RELATED NEEDS/GAPS	STRATEGIC RESULT(S)	OBJECTIVE(S)	POSSIBLE INDICATOR(S)
8. Enroll children/families in affordable health/dental insurance plans.	Need for adequate health and dental insurance	Improved Child Health: Children are born healthy and receive preventive and ongoing regular health, mental health, and dental care	Increase access to preventive and ongoing regular health, mental health, and dental care for children and families Increase capacity to serve children with special needs	Number of children with dental caries Number of child visits to the emergency room Number of children with primary care provider Availability of in-county health and dental services
9. Participate in Dental Summit and resulting 4-county collaborative to improve dental care and accessibility in rural areas.	Access to quality affordable dental care	Improved Child Health: Children receive preventive, ongoing regular dental care and have access to special dental care when necessary	Increase access to quality children's dental services	Availability of accessible, in-county health and dental services
10. Monitor situation at Sierra Valley District Hospital as to what needs might arise as it goes through restructuring; determine what role SCCFC might play in the future of the hospital and the clinics in Loyalton and Downieville. Address needs for emergency care access, especially in west side of county.	Access to quality affordable medical and dental care	Improved Child Health: Children and families receive preventive and ongoing regular health care	Increase access to quality, affordable health and dental care	Number of child visits to emergency room Number of families receiving primary medical care in-county

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	RELATED NEEDS/GAPS	STRATEGIC RESULT(S)	OBJECTIVE(S)	POSSIBLE INDICATOR(S)
11. Work collaboratively with Child Resource and Referral, Local Planning Council, Community College(s)' Child Development Program(s), childcare providers, and others to assess and meet needs for child care worker/provider training, licensing, recruiting, retention, and support.	Shortage of licensed/accredited infant, toddler and day-care providers; lack of pre-school opportunities	Improved Child Development: Children receive quality child care (as defined by provider training, adequate compensation, lack of staff turnover, physical facility, affordable fees, and developmentally appropriate activities)	Increased supports and educational opportunities for child care providers	Access to and support for unit-bearing continued education and training for child care providers Level of training and longevity of child care providers Number of licensed/accredited child care providers
12. Work with Child Resource and Referral, Local Planning Council, parents, and childcare providers to develop a means to fill gaps in child care access and affordability.	Availability and affordability of child care for working parents	Improved Child Development: Children receive quality child care	Increased access to quality licensed family child care and center-based early child care	Number of children in quality licensed family child care and center-based early
13. Formalize and support pre-school program(s) outside of Loyalton area. Increase availability of and access to a quality pre-school program(s) for children 0-4 years of age in the county.	Availability and affordability of pre-school opportunities	Improved Child Development: Services reduce disparities in school readiness across geographic areas	Increased access to quality pre-school programs throughout the county	Number of available pre-school programs Number of children outside the Loyalton area enrolled in pre-school programs

STRATEGY/ACTIVITY	RELATED NEEDS/GAPS	STRATEGIC RESULT(S)	OBJECTIVE(S)	POSSIBLE INDICATOR(S)
14. Work with City of Loyalton, Community College(s), and others to provide swimming lessons to all interested children 0-4; determine means of transporting children from other parts of county to Loyalton pool for swimming lessons. Combine resources with City of Loyalton to make necessary improvements to the pool for this purpose.	Need for water safety, recreational opportunities to learn	Improved Child Health: Children are free of accidental injuries, and are in safe and healthy environments	Increased opportunities for learning experiences	Number of free or reduced price fees to recreational and cultural programs Number of children 0-4 enrolled in swimming instruction
15. Provide mini-grants via a Request for Proposals process to encourage and support development and implementation of educational and recreational programs, activities and opportunities for children 0-4 years old and their families.	Need for educational and recreational opportunities for learning	Improved Child Development: Children enter kindergarten “ready for school”	Increase capacity of community members to provide services to children 0-4 years old	Number of children enrolled in educational and recreational programs; continued interest and enrollment over time
16. Provide mini-grants that address a previously or newly identified need or gap via a Request for Proposal process to encourage and support development and implementation of other programs, activities and opportunities for children 0-4 years old and their families, or that in some way support the SCCFC goals.	Newly identified or prioritized needs and gaps as they come to light	Any/All	To be determined by the newly identified need or gap	To be determined by the newly identified objective

2. Evaluation

The Commission is interested in conducting program evaluation that will be meaningful to the county. Each of the programs and projects will include an evaluation component that will monitor progress toward stated outcomes, objectives and goals, and an annual evaluation of progress will be conducted prior to reviewing and amending the Strategic Plan.

The Commission is also interested in participating in statewide evaluation efforts that are reflective of the community and selected strategies. As the second smallest county in California, Sierra is often frustrated by statewide evaluations that render very little information and data that are useful at the local level. Very often county numbers are so small as to be considered insignificant in the statewide or even regional picture; therefore, one encounters the “N/A” or asterisk in the state data tables that indicate that Sierra County numbers are not included, not available, or not valid. However, those numbers are very valid to the county, and the Commission will support and participate in those evaluative activities that make Sierra’s experience and data relevant at both the state and local levels.

A great strength of the Children and Families Act and Proposition 10 is that they set up a potential for breaking old patterns and use newly developed ways of conducting public business. Within the laws pertaining to conflict of interest, and within the ethical guidelines of public responsibility and accountability, Sierra County Children and Families Commission takes to heart the call to use results-based accountability principles and methods to develop a informative and responsible means of evaluating its programs and activities. In addition, the Commission understands the great relevance of its experience to other rural areas attempting to solve similar problems, and will enthusiastically participate in evaluative activities that serve to “tell the Prop. 10 story.”

The information gleaned from these evaluation measures will be used to inform and enhance ongoing strategic planning, thereby ensuring that future directions and decisions are built on a solid and meaningful foundation.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND STAFF

The Sierra County Children and Families Commission has taken the following steps in the development of an infrastructure and staff to support its efforts:

- Made a decision to become a government entity separate from the county system
- Created Bylaws
- Completed necessary steps to hire staff, i.e. obtaining federal and state employee identification numbers, setting up payroll payments, etc.
- Recruited applicants, interviewed and hired a full-time Executive Director
- Contracted with necessary consultants for planning activities, primarily for a comprehensive needs assessment
- Obtained office space, furniture, and equipment
- Set up a children and families trust account and an investment account with the California Local Agencies Investment Fund
- Developed linkages with the State Commission and the Technical Assistance Center
- Developed linkages with Sierra County service providers

STAFF

The Commission employs a full-time Executive Director to assist the Commission in fulfilling the goals and mandates of Proposition 10 and the Children and Families Act and to carry out the implementation of its strategic plan. The Commission anticipates that this will be the only employee of the Commission, and that any other needs, such as legal counsel, fiscal management, data processing, evaluation, continued strategic planning facilitation, etc., will be handled either by the Executive Director or via subcontracting with an independent consultant.

COMMITTEES

During its planning process, the Commission has acted as a unified body without the need for standing committees. It is anticipated that the Commission will continue to act as a body in decisions concerning legal and fiscal matters, operations, strategic planning, personnel, and Bylaws.

As implementation of the strategic plan begins, however, it is anticipated that several ad hoc committees/advisory groups will be formed for the purposes of implementing particular components of the plan, such as a group to provide input and planning for the west side project, the swimming pool project, the children's center project, etc. In addition, a standing Mini-Grant Committee will be formed to define criteria, develop the RFP, oversee the selection process of mini-grant awards, and make recommendations for awards to the Commission.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION PLAN

1. Investment of Funds

It is the policy of the Sierra County Children and Families Commission to invest a portion of its funding in the California Local Agencies Investment Fund, a fund operated by the Treasurer of the State of California which has no investment in tobacco companies. An initial investment of \$125,000.00 has been made to act as a contingency fund. Additional investments are anticipated to further ensure the continuation of Commission activities in the event that tobacco taxes decline in the future.

2. Personnel and Administrative Expenses

It is anticipated that approximately one-third of the annual \$200,000.00 allocation to the county will be allocated to cover personnel and administrative expenses.

3. Program Expenses

As implementation of the Strategic Plan begins, funds allocated to Sierra County in 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 (less some planning, personnel and administrative costs) are available, as are the funds to be allocated for 2000-2001. A total of \$428,172.00 is available for FY 2000-2001. Based on its strategic plan, the Commission anticipates the following funding allocations for Fiscal Year 2000-2001:

	Percent	Amount
Program Support: Personnel, Operating, Travel, etc.	31%	132,999
Program: Strategies/Activities/Investments	69%	295,173
TOTAL	100%	428,172

It is important to note that the Commission is allocating these amounts with the intention of leveraging funding with other programs and agencies in the county and the region. Program and funding collaboration is anticipated and will be expected of programs and agencies working with the Commission. As plans for major projects proceed, the Commission will research other sources of available funding and work with collaborative partners to develop applications for additional funding targeted to specific projects. The Commission sees potential for this kind of collaborative efforts in several of its endeavors, especially the Four-County Dental Health project, development of the Children's Center, the Literacy program, the swimming pool improvements, the child care training, and the development of additional pre-school opportunities. The Commission also anticipates using the Request for Proposal process in the two mini-grant programs to support collaborative efforts among county programs.